

***NASA FIRST (Foundations of Influence, Relationships, Success, and Teamwork) – For more information, visit the Agency website at [http://www.leadership.nasa.gov/nasa\\_first/home.htm](http://www.leadership.nasa.gov/nasa_first/home.htm) or contact the Langley Program Manager at [Patsy.L.Campbell@nasa.gov](mailto:Patsy.L.Campbell@nasa.gov).***

The NASA FIRST program is part of the Agency's succession management strategy designed to provide employees in science, engineering and professional administrative positions at GS-11 and GS-12 with the foundational skills necessary for their future success within the Agency. The program began its pilot year in 2007. Langley's team composed of Melissa Carter, Jennifer Keyes, Robin Schlecht, and Katrina Young, described their experiences in several articles in the Researcher News. Please see this link for the first article and at the bottom, you will find links to the succeeding articles: [http://www.nasa.gov/centers/langley/news/researchernews/rn\\_nasafirst\\_120806.html](http://www.nasa.gov/centers/langley/news/researchernews/rn_nasafirst_120806.html).

The Center teams are required to select a project that they must complete by the end of the program. During 2008, Langley's participants in the NASA Foundations of Influence, Relationships, Success, and Teamwork (FIRST) Program conducted an important study for the Center. The goal of "A Cultural Hierarchical Insight into Langley's Employee Survey" (ACHILES) project was to evaluate and provide recommendations for improving the culture and communication between employees and senior leadership at LaRC. As part of the ACHILES project, areas for possible cultural improvement were identified through an assessment of the 2007 NASA Culture Survey data. The Culture Survey data was evaluated and focus group sessions were conducted by the NASA FIRST Team. These focus groups were targeted toward obtaining more details about three key areas of interest from the Culture Survey: management honesty, upward communication, and organizational support. In addition, communication strategies from other NASA organizations, as well as external organizations, were evaluated to gain insight and to generate new ideas. The final product of the ACHILES project was a group of recommendations for potential cultural improvement solutions at LaRC. These recommendations were provided to the LaRC Center Leadership Council (CLC). To date, the CLC has already begun the implementation of some of these recommendations.

Below is a summary of recommendations from both the NASA FIRST Team and the employee focus groups associated with the ACHILES project:

#### **Employee Recommendations to Leaders**

- Provide rationale for decisions and all possible information to the employees.
- Identify and eliminate destructive organizational conflicts.
- Make mentoring opportunities available to all employees.
- Engage in open interaction and debate, and offer opportunities for expression.
- Evaluate and improve the financial process.

### **NASA FIRST Team Recommendations**

- Each team should develop communication guidelines.
- Leaders should allocate time on their schedules for informal management by walking around (MBWA).
- Answer the “one why” when providing decisions to employees.

Langley’s pilot team selected a project that correlates to the Langley Strategic Planning Framework Increase Workforce Adaptability Objective. Between February 2007 and October 2007, Langley’s NASA FIRST team conducted focus groups, collected and analyzed data, and researched workforce literature to understand the generational characteristics of Langley employees currently aged 35 years old and younger (as of June 2007) as well as to (1) identify what motivates and de-motivates Langley employees 35 years of age and younger, (2) define Langley employees’ career goals pertaining to stability (retention at NASA) and adaptability (workforce agility), (3) investigate if there are perceived differences between permanent and term employees, and (4) investigate perceptions of Langley’s Senior Leaders. As a result of the NASA FIRST team’s center project entitled: A Generational Investigation to Increase Langley’s Insight about Today’s and Tomorrow’s Young Professionals (AGI2LIT2Y), Langley senior leadership was provided with clarity into what attracts and retains its current and future workforce, its workforces’ needs, in addition to recommendations to remain an agile Center – now and into the future. The OHCM is in the process of implementing the recommendations and will post updates as we progress, both on @LaRC and at our OHCM website. Listed below are the major recommendations:

1. Acknowledge employees for their contributions thru recognition throughout the year.
2. Enhance formal mentoring/new hire program.
3. Post data on term hires (definitions, conversion rate).
4. Continue to disseminate info to employees using multiple methods of communication.
5. Enhance/extend communications from Center Director to include a feedback mechanism such as a blog.
6. Re-establish formal exit interview process to enable the collection of this type of data.
7. Expand work done on FIRST report to include all ages, etc.
8. Follow-up with all groups on a regular interval to track changes in opinions and develop trend information.

9. Provide detailed research of LaRC's current rewards/recognition and value systems.

10. Post the initiative's results of both FIRST work and additional follow-ups (wiki blog).